



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 5

77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD

CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

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SEP 01 2000

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF

Nicor Mercury Sites

CERTIFIED MAIL

RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Cherlyn Tribble
Nicor Gas
1844 Ferry Road
Naperville, IL 60563-9600

RE: Nicor Mercury Sites (Scrap Yards & Processing Facilities)
General Notice of Potential Liability and
Request for Information

Dear Ms Tribble:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has documented the release or threatened release of hazardous substances, pollutants and contaminants at the Chicago Heights Iron & Scrap Company, and is planning to spend public funds to control and investigate these releases. This action will be taken by U.S. EPA pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, 42 U.S.C. §9601 et seq., (CERCLA) as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-499, 100 Stat. 1613 (1986) (SARA), unless U.S. EPA determines that such action will be done properly by a responsible party. Responsible parties under CERCLA include the current and former owners and operators, and persons who generated the hazardous substances or were involved in transport, treatment, or disposal of them at the Site. Under Section 107(a) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. §9607(a), where the Agency uses public funds to achieve the cleanup of the hazardous substances, responsible parties are liable for all costs associated with the removal or remedial action and all other necessary costs incurred in cleaning up the Site, including investigation, planning and enforcement.

The U.S. EPA is currently planning to conduct the following actions at and in relation to the above referenced Site.

1. Investigate and conduct a cleanup of any scrap yards where mercury regulators have been disposed;
2. Screen and/or conduct a cleanup of any processing facilities where mercury has been released as a result of the removal of mercury from regulators;

3. Identify, screen and/or cleanup the larger regulators that have been removed by Nicor or its contractors in commercial facilities;
4. Properly characterize and dispose of all mercury contaminated regulators discovered at these facilities.

U.S. EPA has received information that your organization may have owned or operated or generated or transported hazardous substances that were disposed of at the Site. By this letter, U.S. EPA notifies you of your potential liability with regard to this matter and encourages you, as a potentially responsible party, to reimburse U.S. EPA for costs incurred to date and to voluntarily perform or finance the response activities that U.S. EPA has determined or will determine are required at the Site. U.S. EPA is willing to discuss with you the entry of an appropriate administrative order under which you would perform or finance response activities and reimburse U.S. EPA for its costs. If a consent order cannot be promptly concluded, U.S. EPA may issue a unilateral order under Section 106 of CERCLA, requiring you to perform specified work. Under Sections 106 and 107 of CERCLA, you may be liable for reimbursement of U.S. EPA's costs, for statutory penalties, and for treble damages for noncompliance with such an order.

As a potentially responsible party, you should notify U.S. EPA in writing within four (4) days of receipt of this letter of your willingness to perform or finance the activities described above. If U.S. EPA does not receive a timely response, U.S. EPA will assume that your organization does not wish to negotiate a resolution of its potential responsibility in connection with the Site and that your organization has declined any involvement in performing the response activities.

Your letter should indicate the appropriate name, address, and telephone number for further contact with you. If you are already involved in discussions with state or local authorities, engaged in voluntary cleanup action or involved in a lawsuit regarding this Site, you should continue such activities as you see fit. This letter is not intended to advise you or direct you to restrict or discontinue any such activities; however, you are advised to report the status of those discussions or actions in your response to this letter and to provide a copy of your response to any other parties involved in those discussions or actions.

In addition, U.S. EPA is seeking to obtain certain other information from you pursuant to its authority under Section 104(e) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. §9604(e), for the purpose of enforcing CERCLA and to assist in determining the need for response to a release of hazardous substance(s) under CERCLA. The Administrator of the U.S. EPA has the authority to require

any person who has or may have information relevant to any of the following to furnish U.S. EPA with such information: (1) the identification, nature or quantity of materials which have been or are generated, treated, stored or disposed of at, or transported to, a facility; (2) the nature or extent of a release or threatened release of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant at or from a facility; and (3) the ability of a person to pay for or perform a cleanup. Pursuant to Section 104(e) of CERCLA, you are hereby requested to submit the following information concerning the Nicor Mercury Site Scrap Yards located in the Nicor Service Area.

1. Identify all locations where mercury was taken after its removal from regulators in Nicor customers' homes. Provide the names and addresses of all such locations.
2. Identify all locations where regulators containing or formerly containing mercury were taken after their removal from Nicor customers' homes. Provide the names and addresses of all such locations.
3. Describe in detail the procedures used for processing regulators processing mercury at the locations identified in response to request 1 above.
4. Describe in detail the procedures used for processing regulators containing or formerly containing mercury at the locations identified in response to request 2 above. Provide copies of all documents describing those procedures.
5. Identify all locations where Nicor sent for disposal, reclamation, or other disposition, the mercury it collected from its customers' homes.
6. Identify all locations where Nicor sent for disposal, scrapping, reclamation, or other disposition, the regulators containing or formerly containing mercury that it collected from its customers' homes.
7. Identify all persons (including all companies) used by Nicor to transport mercury.
8. Identify all persons (including all companies) used by Nicor to transport regulators that contained or formerly contained mercury. This includes transportation for processing by Nicor and transportation for ultimate disposition after processing by Nicor.
9. Identify all commercial businesses which utilized regulators containing mercury or where regulators containing mercury have been removed.

For all of the above questions "Nicor" shall mean Nicor Gas and all of its affiliates, employees, contractors, subcontractors, agents, and other persons acting on Nicor Gas' behalf.

To assist you in answering this request, the information sought pertains to any and all information in your possession, custody or control relating to the operation of the above referenced Site and to the transportation, storage, and/or disposal of hazardous substances or the generation of hazardous substances which were ultimately disposed of or offered for disposal at the Site. The relevant time period for this request is 1990 to the present.

This request is directed to your company, its officers, directors, and employees, and its subsidiaries, divisions, facilities and their officers, directors, and employees. The information sought herein must be sent to U.S. EPA within seven (6) calendar days of your receipt of this letter. Failure to respond fully and truthfully to this request, or to adequately justify any failure to respond, may result in an enforcement action against you by U.S. EPA under Section 104 of CERCLA, as amended. The information requested herein must be provided notwithstanding its possible characterization as confidential information or trade secrets. You may request however, that any such information be handled as confidential business information. A request for confidential treatment must be made when the information is provided, since any information not so identified will not be accorded this protection by the U.S. EPA. Information claimed as confidential will be handled in accordance with the provisions of 40 C.F.R. Part 2.

The written statements submitted pursuant to this request must be notarized and submitted under an authorized signature certifying that all information contained therein is true and accurate to the best of the signatory's knowledge and belief. Moreover, any documents submitted to U.S. EPA pursuant to this information request should be certified as true and authentic to the best of the signatory's knowledge and belief. Should the signatory find, at any time after the submittal of the requested information, that any portion of the submitted information is false, the signatory should so notify U.S. EPA. If any answer certified as true should be found to be untrue, the signatory can and may be prosecuted pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §1001. The U.S. EPA has the authority to use the information requested herein in any administrative, civil or criminal action.

Your responses to both the notice of potential liability four (4) days and the information requests within seven (6) days, should be sent to:

Carol Ropski
U.S. EPA - Region 5
Emergency Enforcement & Support Section SE-5J
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Direct any legal questions to Thomas Krueger of the Office of Regional Counsel at (312) 886-0562.

Due to the nature of the problem at this Site and the attendant legal ramifications, U.S. EPA strongly encourages you to submit a written response within the time frames specified herein. We hope you will give this matter your immediate attention.

Sincerely yours,

Richard C. Karl, Chief
Emergency Response Branch

cc: Angela Foster-Rice